NEWS

from the

RARE BOOK ROOM

Cameron Library
University of Alberta

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
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LIBRARY

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Special Codex Manesse Issue

A photograph of the opened facsimile copy of the "Codex Manesse." Its size is 15" high by 11" wide; the spine is 4½" deep. The illustration shows one of the 138 paintings (illuminations) in the manuscript. On the opposite page is an example of one of the handwritten lyrics or minnesongs in the collection.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
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NEWS FROM THE RARE BOOK ROOM

Vol.1, no.3, March, 1965.

Cameron Library,
University of Alberta,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Since the last issue of the "news notes" the Rare Book Committee has met and dealt with some of the problems in connection with the transfer of rare books from the open stacks to the Rare Book Room, or the Closed Stacks in the Special Services area.

On November 10, 1964, when the Library Information Bulletin was sent to all members of the faculty, the Rare Books Committee and the Library Administration requested the assistance of the teaching departments in bringing to the attention of the library, books in their own field which are rare and valuable and should not remain on the open shelves.

Each member of the Rare Book Committee made it his responsibility to check the stacks in his own speciality and submit to the Library, through the Rare Book Department charge slips of books which should be removed from the open stacks. Each committee member also asked staff members in their own departments to co-operate with them and the Library in the "save the rare books" campaign. Unfortunately, owing to the Christmas holiday period and the pressure of other work, there is still much work to be done in the stacks to transfer valuable books now shelved there into either the Rare Book Room or the Closed Stack Area. May we again ask the assistance of the teaching departments to co-operate in this project.

The main purpose in issuing the third number of the "news notes" is to record some information about the Library's most recent and most expensive single acquisition to date, a facsimile copy of the Grösse Heidelberger Manessiche Lieder-Handschrift also known as the "Codex Manesse".

The original copy of this beautiful manuscript is in the Palatina Library of the University of Heidelberg. It consists of one of the largest collections of the lyric poetry composed by the German minnesingers of the 12th and 13th centuries. The verses of these poets were handwritten by scribes on pages of parchment folio size, and illustrated by illuminations (paintings in colour) by an artist or artists. Each painting accompanying the verse of each individual poet, depicted some significant incident in the life of the minnesinger, and often was supposed to represent a portrait, or a symbolic portrait of the poet.

The main sources for the songs of the minnesingers are the following manuscripts: -

A. Die alte (kleine) Heidelberger Liederhandschrift.
B. Die Weingartner Liederhandschrift.
C. Die Grösse Heidelberger (Manessische) Liederhandschrift.
D. Die Jenaer Liederhandschrift.

Over the years there has been a continuing interest in the poetry in these manuscripts and they have been published in various editions. As early as 1748, Johann J. Bodmer issued in Zürich, selections from the Codex Manesse under the title "Proben der alten Schwäbischen poesiedes 13ten jahrhunderts". The most complete collection of these poems, "Minnesänger", was published in 1838, edited by F.H. von der Hagen in four volumes. Since that time a steady stream of selections and collections of groups of poets and individual poets have been published.

However, the first exact facsimile photographic copy of the "Codex Manesse" was published in a limited edition of 320 copies by the firm of Insul-Verlag in Leipzig in 1925-27. The copy that the library has secured is number 144. To give some idea of the size of the manuscript, its measurements are: 15" X 11" X 4 1/2". It is such an exact reproduction of the original manuscript that even the small holes, the slight wrinkles and the discolouration in the parchment are clearly visible. In 1929, the same firm issued a companion descriptive volume edited by Rudolph Sillib, Friederick Panzer and Arthur Haseloff. We have also secured this volume, which should be useful to anyone making a careful study of the Manuscript.

To describe this unique manuscript and something about the poetry and the minnesingers represented in it, Mr. Adam Kantautas, assistant Order Librarian, and the Rare Book Librarian have collaborated to produce this issue of the "news notes". Mr. Kantautas, who assiduously searched in the O.P. book markets of Europe for the facsimile copy of the manuscript, will relate something about its recent acquisition, the technical aspects of its appearance, its compilation and its subsequent history. The Rare Book Librarian has outlined briefly the history of the Minnesingers and something about a group of the more important poets included in the manuscript. The reproduced copies of the illustrations accompanying the songs can only (alas) be shown in outline in black and white.

DIE MANESSISCHE LIEDER-HANDSCHRIFT.

1. The Acquisition of the Facsimile Copy of the Manuscript by the Library, Some Technical Aspects of its Appearance, its Compilation and its Subsequent History. Adam Kantautas.

The Department of Germanic Languages and Linguistics of the University of Alberta asked the Library early in 1964 to purchase a facsimile copy of "Die Manessische Lieder-Handschrift" for the purpose of graduate research.

The Order Department of the Library, contacted several dealers in Germany asking them to report on the possibility of acquiring this work. For almost a year no answers were received until one morning, on November 24th, 1964, a telegram arrived from the dealer, Otto Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden, reporting that one copy of the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift was offered at an auction sale in Germany at a tentative price of DM 9-10,000. It was necessary for the Library to give very careful consideration to the matter before the bid could be cabled to the agent.

Once the decision was made to buy, the bid was cabled to Otto Harrassowitz asking him to represent the Library at the auction sale. The bid was successful and the facsimile edition of the manuscript was thus acquired. It reached the Library in December 1964.

An official ceremony was held in the Rare Book Room on January 18, 1965, to mark the manuscripts arrival. Several members of interested Departments were present to examine the volume.

RUDGER MANSS

The Original Manuscript.

The original manuscript, the "Codex Manesse", was compiled at the court of Rüdiger (or Ruediger) Manesse in Zürich at the beginning of the 14th century. Rüdiger II and his son Johannes were prominent citizens of Zürich. Rüdiger II was for many years a member of the council of the City of Zürich and also on the executive of the Council of the ruling nobility. He died September 5, 1304.

The Manesse family were widely known for their patronage of the arts in general, but particularly for their ardent interest in the verse of the minnesingers. At this time the art of the minnesingers had declined, and the Manesse family, aware of this fact, made all possible efforts to collect the minnesongs from those who knew them by heart.

The original manuscript was well planned in advance, before the actual writing took place. The minnesingers were arranged in the volume according to their rank of nobility. Spaces for additions were left blank and the index compiled when the songs of only 112 minnesingers had been collected.

The "Codex Manesse" is the largest collection of minnesongs of the Middle Ages; it contains about 7,000 verses composed by 138 minnesingers. It is also one of the most beautiful German manuscripts of this period.

The volume consists of 426 parchment sheets and 6 paper sheets. There are 138 full pages of beautifully coloured illustrations, which depict the life in court, the musical performances, the stories told through song and the portraits of the minnesingers.

The original manuscript has three blank numbered sheets at the front and one at the back. Following the three blank sheets, there are two sheets numbered folio 1 and folio 2. The following sheets are numbered from 1 to 428. The last sheet has an inscription "et^{dr}" next to the number 428; this indicates that the written-in paging of the volume occurred in France, in the Royal library of Paris, because "et^{dr}" means "et dernier".

On sheet 3, there is the accession number 7266 of the Bibliotheca Regiae and classification call number "All 32", which means Allemand 32, i.e. German language manuscript number 32.

Below the accession number we find an inscription by the Bibliotheca Regiae: "Cantilenae veteres, Germanica lingua pleraeqne de laudibus Imperatorum, Regnum, et aliorum illustrium virorum, de mulieribus, de vino, variisqne rebus, figuris miniatis, sed minus elegantibus ornatae. Codex scriptus circa annum 1300, in membranis".

Next follows the record of transfer of the manuscript from the Bibliothèque National to M. Trübner dated February 23, 1888 and the red seal of the Bibliothèque National.

On sheet 4 and on verso of sheet 428, we find a seal of the "Bibliotheca Regiae" (Royal Library of Paris). The manuscript was bound in red maroquin while it was in the possession of the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris. The binding could have taken place about 1680 during the reign of Louis XIV. The Coat of Arms of the Bourbons is impressed in gold on the front and back cover.

Having considered the physical appearance of the manuscript it is interesting to investigate the date of which the volume was compiled. The experts on the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift came to the conclusion that most of the volume was written at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. Additions to the manuscript could have taken place between 1315 and 1340. However, Dr. Rudolph Sillib, the textual authority on the work, believes that it was completed by 1330. Because of certain internal evidence in the manuscript, such as the great variety of the parchment used, the many styles of handwriting, the contents of the songs and the several additions, it is believed that the Codex Manesse was worked on by many persons for a long period of time rather than for one short period.

There is not much doubt that the manuscript was written in Zürich, Switzerland, because the language used is close to the Allemanic dialect which was spoken at that time in Zürich and in the vicinity of Zürich.

More evidence of the place of origin can be found in one of the songs in the manuscript by Meister Johannes Hadlaub who sings, "One can find more songs in the manuscript in Zürich than one could find in the whole kingdom, and that the Manesse family makes a great effort to acquire every manuscript they know of, and therefore, he and his son have collected many noble songs."

The History and Travels of the Original Manuscript.

The length of time that the manuscript remained in the possession of the Manesse family after the death of Rüdiger and Johannes is not known, but by the beginning of the 16th century the manuscript was in the possession of Ulrich Fugger of Augsburg. He was a member of a wealthy and well known banking family in the city. He had been a treasurer in the Vatican for some time but later joined the Reformation movement. Because of his religious differences, he was forced to leave his city in 1559. When he left he took his valuable library with him, including the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift, and fled to his friend Elector Otto Henry (Ottheinrich) of Pflaz in Heidelberg. The manuscript was placed for safekeeping in the Church of the Holy Ghost.

At this time the Elector Palatine Otto Henry founded the University Library in Heidelberg, which was named "Bibliotheca Palatina". The Library was housed in the choir of the Church of the Holy Ghost.

In 1571 Elector Friedrich III of Pfalz ordered a list compiled of all the manuscripts which belonged to Ulrich Fugger and also those which were housed in the Church of the Holy Ghost. This list is now a most valuable official record of the manuscripts of these two collections at that time. On this list the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift was recorded as "Henrici VI-ti Liederbuch in quarto".

After Fugger's death in 1584 all his manuscripts were given to the University of Heidelberg's Library, the Bibliotheca Palatina.

In 1593, the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift was loaned to Johann Philipp von Hohensax. After his death in 1596, it circulated from one family to another in Switzerland and only after energetic efforts by the electors of Heidelberg, was it repossessed in 1607 from the widow of Johann Philipp von Hohensax in Forsteck.

During the Thirty Years War in Europe, 1618-48, Heidelberg was taken by Herzog Maximilian I von Bayern, in about 1621, and the Bibliotheca Palatina fell, of course, into his hands. Maximilian I donated many of these valuable manuscripts to Pope Gregorius XV and in 1623 the transportation from Heidelberg to Rome began. Half a year later the manuscripts arrived safely in Rome and were placed in the Vatican Library.

It is not known how or why the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift left the Vatican Library and was taken to France. Of the many hypothesis, the one which seems to be most logical supposes that Pope Urban VIII gave the manuscript to his nephew Cardinal Francesco Barberini who at that time represented the Holy See in France. It is known that Cardinal Barberini was a good friend of the well known scientists Peirese and Dupuy. Desiring to establish a closer relationship between France and the Vatican, he might have donated the manuscript to one of them. This theory is supported to a certain extent by the inscription on the sheet 3 in the original manuscript, where the Bibliothèque National writes: "Le present manuscript entre a la Bibliothèque du Roi avec les collections des freres Dupuy en 1656 ..."

It was not until 1697 that the value of the manuscript was rediscovered by a Danish scientist, Friedrich Rostgaard; and again in 1726 by J. Chr. Bartenstein. After 1726 the Germans made great efforts to repossess the manuscript from the Bibliothèque National and complicated negotiations took place, over a long period of time.

However it was not until the 19th century that the book-dealer Karl J. Trübner of Strassburg, who was born in Heidelberg, finally succeeded in acquiring the Codex Manesse. The price paid was 150,000 francs and in addition he gave the Bibliothèque National 166 valuable manuscripts, "Libri and Barrois" - Fonds, in which the French Government was very much interested.

The official transfer of the Manessische Lieder-Handschrift took place on February 3, 1888, in Paris. Soon after, on April 10, 1888, it was returned to the Bibliotheca Palatina, University of Heidelberg, where it is now considered one of its rarest treasures.

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2. A Brief History of the German Minnesingers of the 12th to 14th Centuries. Dorothy I. Hamilton.

The body of poetry developed by the troubadours and later by the German minnesingers during the 11th to 14th centuries had a profound influence on subsequent European poetry and poets. Many of the troubadours and minnesingers were, for the most part, gifted poets and musicians, and, as they travelled from court to court, where they composed and sang their songs, they developed and refined the lyric to a stage never before known. Both Dante and Chaucer were influenced by their lyric poetry.

The German Minnesingers or Minnesangers flourished in the literary period in Germany known as the Middle High German or classical period, which was from about 1180 to 1350. The language that the poets of this period used was the South German court language. They seem to have made a definite attempt to unify this literary language and in this way refined and improved it. Although the German minnesingers based their songs on the formal code of chivalry of woman homage which was general throughout Europe at that time, their individual type of lyrics seem to have developed almost independently of the provencal poetry of the troubadours. The courtly homage of women known in Germany as "Frauendienst" seems to have been on a much higher and truly more sincere and chivalrous plane than that of the woman homage of the troubadours. The themes of the German lyric poets were homage to God, homage to the ruler, as well as homage to their lady. Many of them also sang of their love of nature, the flowers, the trees, the birds and the changing seasons.

Their poetry was a direct outgrowth of the feudal system and owes much to the rise of the great Hohenstaufen kings and emperors who encouraged the arts generally and who actively supported the minnesingers

The Count and Countess of Thuringia sit enthroned above while the competing poets sit in a rather stiff row below. They were: Heinrich von Ofterdingen, Walter von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Reinmer von Zweter, Heinrich der Schreiber, Her Bitolf. The figure in the flat cap may have been an official.

as a part of the court circle. According to many writers, there was held in Mainz about the end of the 12th century, at the court of Kaiser Friederich Barbarossa, a great festival, which introduced the code of chivalry into Germany. To this festival were invited all the important court circles of western Europe, among whom were many of the more gifted troubadours on the continent. It may have been that the German poets of this period were encouraged and influenced by this great medieval songfest.

The legend of another tournament of song has been told in the opera "Tanhauser" by Wagner. The composer has the famous poet Wolfram von Eschenbach the friend and rival of Tanhauser, in musical combat. Also according to legend, the two greatest minnesingers of the middle ages Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walter von der Vogelweide met for the first time at the Wartburg Festival at the court of the Count of Thuringia. One of the interesting illustrations in the Codex Manesse shows a group of poets sitting together in a row who were supposed to have competed in the "Sangerstreit" at Wartburg. They are Heinrich von Ofterdingen, Herr Walter von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Herr Reinmar von Zweter, Herr Heinrich der Schreiber and Herr Bitorf. (see illustration on opposite page)

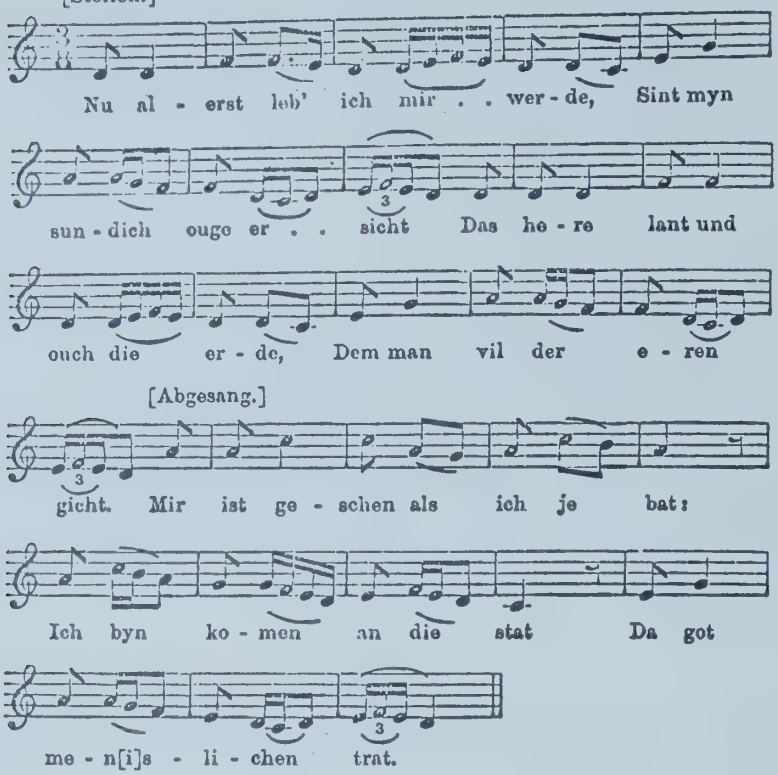
The crusades too had a profound influence on the code of knighthood in Europe, by emphasizing good manners, higher moral standards, and by stimulating an upsurge of religious feeling. Intellectual horizons were also widened by the contact of the crusaders, many of them troubadours and minnesingers, with the strange and unusual customs of the middle east and particularly with the highly developed social customs in Constantinople.

The minnesingers were mainly from the lower nobility, often poor but in most cases having received some education. There were three main periods in the development of their poetry. During the first period, about 1150 to 1190, the poets were mainly Austrian and Bavarian knights, such as the earliest known der von Kurenburger and Dietmar von Aist, who based their verse on the native folksongs. In the second period, 1190 to 1230, the lyric reached its highest development with the gifted compositions of such minnesingers as Heinrich von Veldecke, who was known as the first true minnesinger, Friedrich von Hausen or Husen, Heinrich von Morungen, Hartmann von Aue, and the most important poet of the middle ages Wolfram von Eschenbach, except for the sweetest singer of them all, known as the nightingale, Walter von der Vogelweide. During the third period 1240 to 1400, the poetry of the minnesingers seems to have degenerated into a mere formalized imitation of the earlier more gifted poets, with the exception of a few poets in the earlier tradition such as Master Johannes Hadloub, a friend of Rüdiger Manesse, and Heinrich von Meissen (known as Frauenlaub) who was the last of the minnesingers or the first of the meistersingers. Feudalism and the period of chivalry by this time was on the wane, and soon passed completely from the scene.

A SONG OF WALTER VON DER VOGELWEIDE

Ex. 18. [1]

[Stollen.]


Nu al - erst leb' ich mir . . wer - de, Sint myn
sun - dich ouge er . . sicht Das he - re lant und
ouch die er - de, Dem man vil der e - ren
[Abgesang.]
gicht. Mir ist ge - schen als ich je bat:
Ich byn ko - men an die stat Da got
me - n[i]s - li - chen trat.

[1] From a fragment discovered in the State Archives, Münster; facsimile in *S.I.M.*, xii, facing p. 500. A tempting emendation is E for F in bars 7 and 15, but the MS. reading is quite clear both here and in the last bar but one. An alternative interpretation of the *anacrusis* is to write and .

[1] The most important Minnesinger MSS. with music are: Munich, Staatsbibl. germ. 4997 (the 'Colmar' MS.); a MS. in the University Library, Jena (the 'Jena' MS., a superb facsimile was published by K. K. Müller in 1896); Berlin, Kgl. Bibl. germ. 2vo, 779 ('Nithart's Song Book', formerly belonging to von Hagen and reproduced by him in *Minnesinger*, iv, 845–52); Vienna, Nationalbibl. 2701 (reproduced in *Denk. der Tonkunst in Öst.*, xx, pt. 2) and 2856 (published by Mayer and Rietsch, *Die Mondsee-Wiener Liederhandschrift*). Some of the songs in Vienna, Nationalbibl. 2856 (which is late fourteenth or early fifteenth century), are in mensural notation and clearly in duple time.

[2] Berlin, Kgl. Bibl. germ. 4°, 981; facsimiles in Wolf, *Handbuch der Notationskunde*, facing p. 176, and *Musikalische Schrifttafeln*, no. 21.

All their lyrics were composed to be sung. Many of the minnesingers as well as being poets were highly gifted musicians. Some, if not all of them, improvised their own music as they sang, but some of them composed music which was always sung with a particular lyric. The majority of them were also gifted performers, and played several musical instruments such as the videl (viedle, giege), the harp or psaltery, the flute and the lute. In cases where the poet did not have a good voice, or did not perform well on a musical instrument, or did not care to perform in public, he often employed a lesser musician, usually known as a jongleur. This assistant he trained to sing his poetry as he wished his lyrics to be heard. Their songs were the Lied, the Spruch and Leich. The Lied was the lyric used in love songs, the Spruch was used for religious or political poetry and the Leich was usually a dance form.

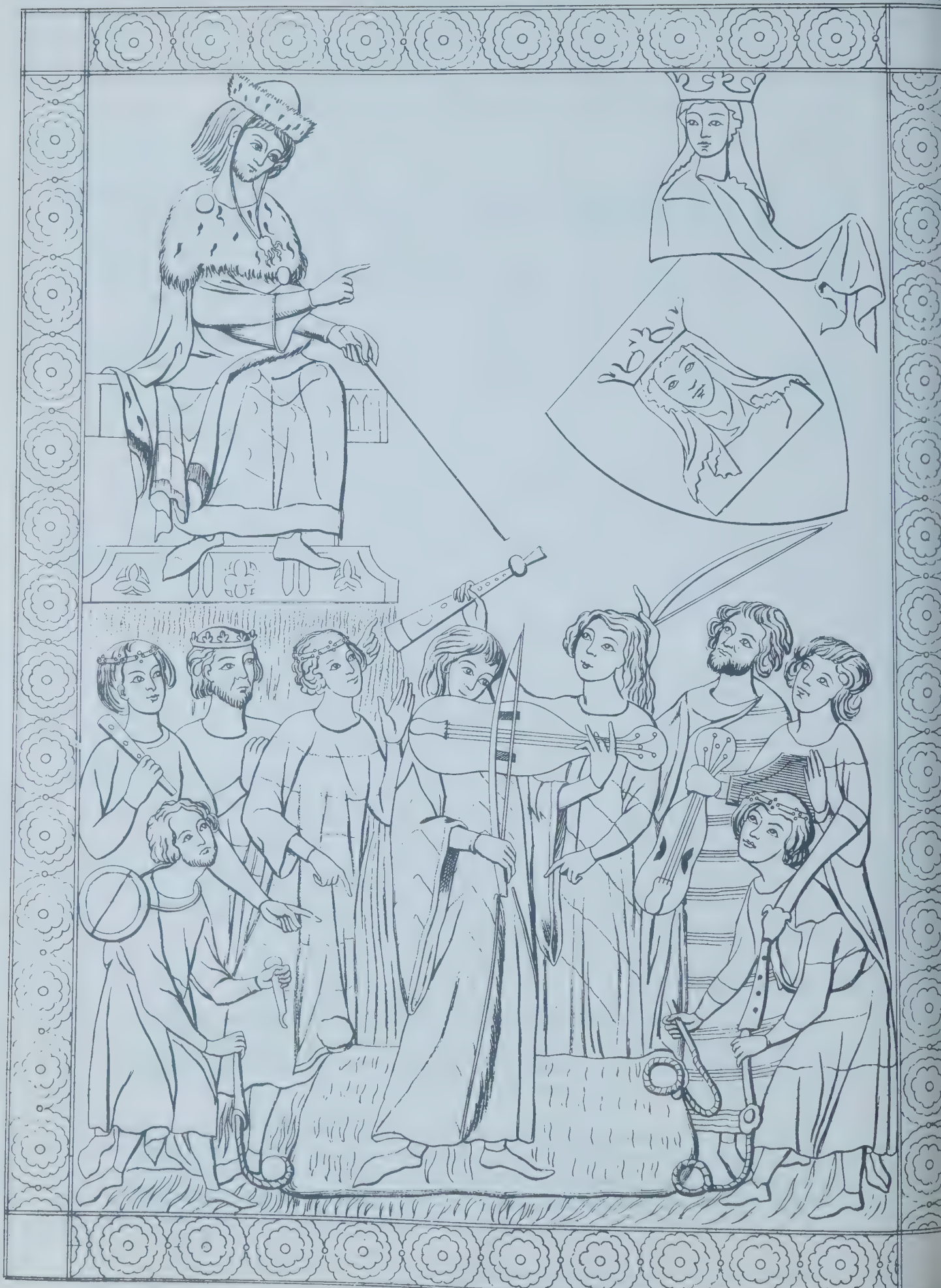
The melody of the minnesong was based on the metre and poetical construction of the strophe, antistrophe and episode, (stollen). Scholes in his "history of music" says (the minnesong) "is expressed in the contemporary gregorian notation of plainsong --- necessarily they employed the modes, but it is noticeable that a good many of their tunes are in the mode which is the same as our major scale." (See illustration of a song of Walter von der Vogelweide on opposite page)

One of the most interesting illuminated illustrations in the Codex Manesse is that depicting Heinrich von Meissen, known as Frauenlaub, who was the last of the minnesinger, conducting an orchestra. This illustration is in warm and vivid colours of red, blue, pink and gold. This small orchestra was perhaps at the court of Rüdiger Manesse or may have been in a school of music that Frauenlaub was supposed to have conducted in Mainz during his later life. Frauenlaub sits on a dais and conducts with baton and finger. The central figure is playing what appears to be a violin (videl, viedal, crout, or rolle). Immediately behind him is a player with a wind instrument, which looks more like a horn than a flute. To his right someone is playing a harp or psaltry, and to the extreme right a figure is holding a flute. The other persons without instruments may have been singers. (See illustration over)

The Old Lieder-Buoch.

At the time that Rüdiger Manesse lived, in the latter half of the 13th century and the early part of the 14th century, the high period of the minnesingers was over and the age of the meistersingers had begun with the lesser poet Frauenlaub.

Rüdiger Manesse and his family evidently feared that the great body of ephemeral minneleider might be lost to the world, if they were not written down and thus preserved. So they set about compiling them at their court or mansion in Zürich. They formed a kind of academy where each individual piece of poetry was examined and a decision made



Frauenlob conducting an orchestra.

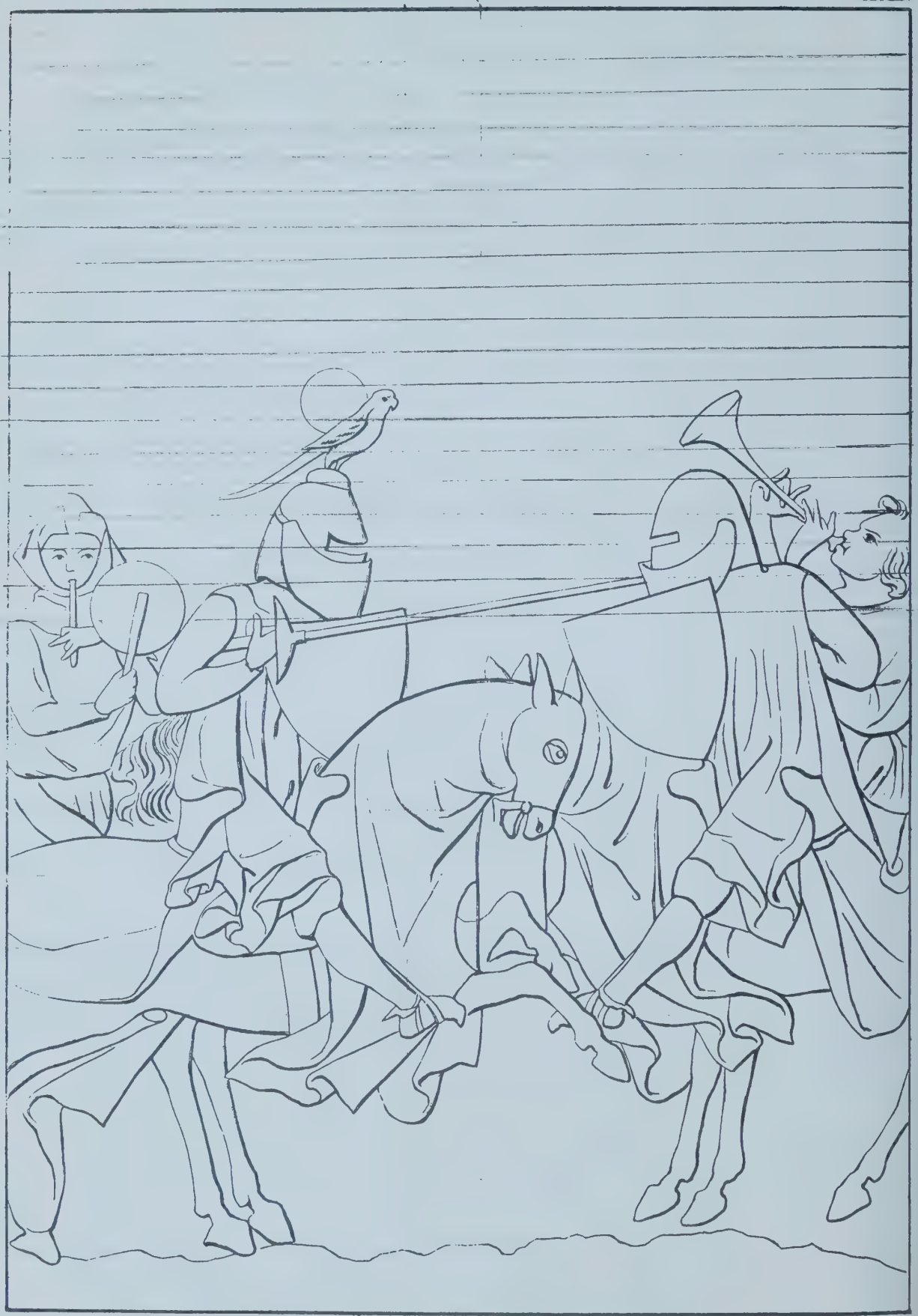
as to its merit. If it was considered worthy it was then prepared for transcribing in the great "Lieder-Buoch". No doubt Johannes von Hadloub, the last of the true line of minnesingers, was one of the group who examined the poetry and decided on its merits, as he was a personal friend of Rüdiger Manesse and his family. In one of his own poems he describes the work of collecting the lyrics by the Manesse family.

In some cases, even by that time, some of the poetry would have been available in temporary handwritten form; however, the main body of it would have to be recorded by scribes from the memories of the poets then living or the jongleurs who remembered the songs. It was a happy thought to illustrate the verse by an appropriate painting describing some important event in the life of each poet or some symbolic feature of his character. It might be that the scribes responsible for writing down the songs was also an illuminator, but it was more likely that painters were also employed for the work of illustrating the volume. By this time many of the scribes and illuminators were no longer working exclusively in monasteries but often wandered from court to court as their services were needed.

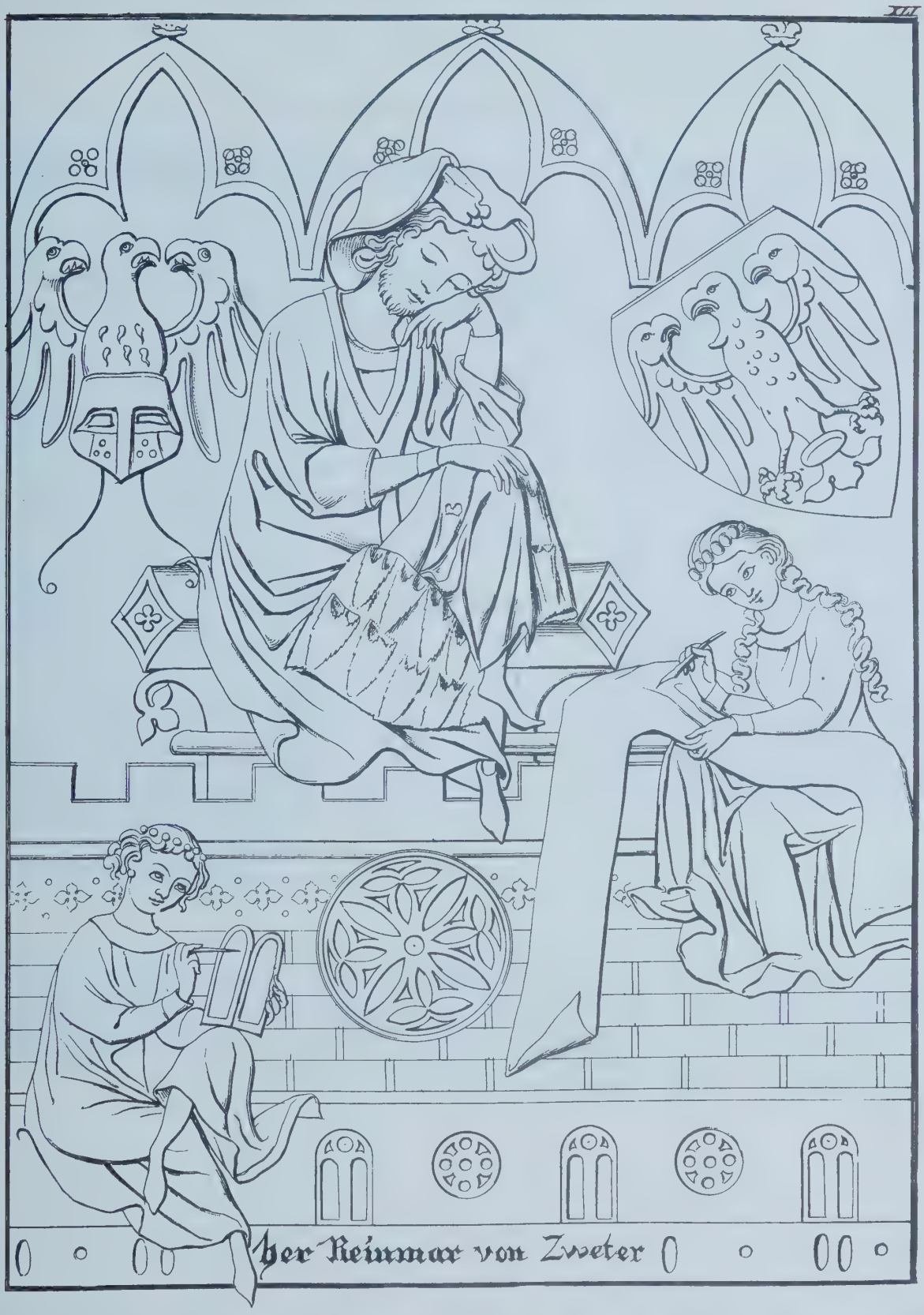
The methods the scribes and illustrators used is clearly visible in the "Codex Manesse". A loose page of parchment was pinned down on the surface of a desk or table, then guide lines were ruled at exact distances apart down the whole page from left to right so that the scribes could write evenly on these lines. The illuminators also outlined their drawings and then painted in the colours. An interesting example of their methods is shown in the Manuscript. One of the illustrations has been completely outlined, but for some reason was never completed. (See illustration over) The pigments that the painters used were quite varied in hue and were put on with quill pens, and brushes.

Of the 138 illustrations of poets collected in the Codex Manesse and listed here, only ten of some of the more important minnesingers have been selected as examples of the material included in the manuscript. These range from Heinrich von Veldecke (or Veldig) known as the first of the minnesingers, to the last of the minnesingers (or the first of the meistersingers), Meister Heinrich von Meissen (or Frauenlob).

1. Heinrich von Veldeke.
2. Dietmar von Aist or Ast or Eist.
3. Friederich von Husen or Hausen.
4. Heinrich von Morungen.
5. Hartmann von Aue.
6. Her Reinmar der alte (von Hagenau).
7. Wolfram von Eschenbach.
8. Walter von der Vogelweide.
9. Johannes Hadloub.
10. Heinrich von Meissen (Frauenlob).



An illustration in the Codex Manesse which was outlined ready to paint, but for some reason was never completed.



One of the interesting illustrations in the Manuscript is that of Reinmar von Zweter, a blind poet in the collection, shown composing a lyric while a small figure of a scribe, who looks like a woman sits in the foreground with a long scroll of parchment or paper busily writing with a quill pen. The figure in the lower left holds a diptych (a two-sided coloured wax tablet) and a stylus.

Heinrich von Veldecke (about 1150 - 1190)

He was born near Maestricht of a noble family. It is thought that he may have been educated for the Church, but became a poet and lived in various courts, for the most part in the court of Landgraf Hermann of Thuringia. He was greatly influenced by the provençal poetry and is mainly known for his epic poem "Eneid". He has been given the credit for founding the chivalrous love romance in Germany, Gottfried von Strassburg says of him "he grafted on the German tongue the first twig from which came the later branches and blossoms". He was not a great poet as were some of his succesors.

Here is one of his lyrics:

The lovely summer's on the wing,
The birds with glee their notes are trying,
Each with other daily vying,
In singing welcome to the spring.
The eagle to the gentle breeze
Beckons from his lofty dwelling,
On the linden-trees
I have seen the leaf-buds swelling.

The symbolic illustration in the Codex Manesse (above) shows him sitting outside surrounded by many birds and flowers scattered all over the painting in a design. He is probably composing a lyric for he is pointing with his finger to a sheet of parchment before him. His coat of arms and headdress are painted at the top of the picture.

'HER DIETMAR VON EIST'

Dietmar von Ast or Aist. (about 1150)

Not much seems to be known about this Austrian poet, except that he is one of the earliest of the minnesingers. His poems seem to be derived from the folk tunes and are simple and sincere; he composed one of the earliest of the "tagelied" or morning songs, so much in favor among the minnesingers. His poetry shows the minnesong in transition.

His song of the lady and the falcon is well known:

By the heath stood a lady
All lonely and fair,
As she watch'd for her lover
A falcon flew near.
"Happy falcon!" she cried,
"Who can fly where he list,
And can choose in the forest
The tree he loves best!"

In the illustration from the manuscript the poet is shown dressed like a trader, riding on a donkey. He has hung on a rod a collection of belts and bags to attract "His Lady" to the door of the castle. She is carrying in her arms the symbolic small white dog that indicates fidelity in love. His knightly headdress and coat of arms are at the top of the painting.

HER REINMAR

Reinmar von Hagenau (der Alte) 1160 to 1210

He was an Alsatian who spent most of his life in the Viennese court and his poetry was an outstanding example of the court lyric. He was highly regarded by his fellow minnesingers and particularly so by his gifted pupil Walter von der Vogelweide. He was known as "Master". He followed Duke Leopold to the Crusade of 118

When his Lord died he laments him in the following verse:

The spring has come once more they say
The joy is here again
And therefore it were meet that I be glad,
But how that may be, tell me, pray
When cruel death has lately slain
My joy, and left my heart forever sad.

In painting in the manuscript above he is sitting in a room with gothic windows reading a poem to "His Lady", who holds in her arms the symbolic white dog of faithfulness. Above their heads are his knightly shield an headdress.

HER FRIDERICH VON HUSEN

Friederich von Husen or Hausen (1170 - Died about the end of the 12th century)

He seems to have been born in the Middle Rhine district. He was a close friend of Kaiser Henrich VI, and accompanied him to Asia Minor where he was killed in a battle against the Turks. He was one of the gifted minnesingers. Many of his songs are of a melancholy caste, concerned with his longing for his home.

A loose translation of one of his songs is:

What can it be that the world calls love,
and that gives me such woe at all hours
and takes away my senses?
Love if I could only meet thee in combat
and put out thy eyes!
If thou wert dead I should think myself happy.

The painter in the illustration in the manuscript above had depicted him in a boat, on a turbulent sea on his way to the crusades. Two sailors are looking after the sails and mast. The poet is in melancholy contemplation, wrapped in his cloak and holding in his hand the parchment roll indicating that he is composing a verse.

HER HARTMAN VON OUWE

Hartmann von Aue (1170 to 1215)

He was a member of the lower Swabian nobility, and a member of the court of Herr von Aue, whose castle was near Zürich. He seems to have been highly educated in a monastery. Litt is known of his life but he went, after the dea of his Leige Lord, to the crusades about 1196 o 1197.

He was a highly gifted court epic poet and his minnelieds are of minor importance in his body of poetry. One of his most important earl epic works is "Erik", which influenced both Tennyson and Longfellow.. Tennyson based his poem "Enid" on it and Longfellow his "Golden Legend."

Erik

Now happened it as was their won't,
That he, about the warm noon-tide
Was sleeping by her side.
The sun therin so fairly beamed

That he their servant seemed,
When he the wedded pair
So through the window there
Did light, that in the room
And they each other well could see
Then fell to thinking she
That he, through her was execrete;
Thence was her trouble swift and great;
She thought he was asleep;
Now sigheth she full deep,
And looketh on him steadily.
She said: "Poor man, alas for thee
And me, thy miserable wife,
That ever in my life
So many curses should receive!

In the illustration above Hartmann von Aue is shown in a particularly attractive painting, when seen in colour, mounted on his horse in full knightly dress, holding his banner with the three eagle heads.

HER HEINRICH VON MORUNGEN

Heinrich von Morungen (about the first half of the 13th century)

Heinrich von Morungen was a Thuringian and little else is known about his except that he spent the last of his life in Leipzig. He is known as the most gifted poet among the minnesingers next to Walter von der Vogelweide and Wolfram von Eschenbach. His work shows originality, imagination and humour.

My lady dearly loves a pretty bird,
That sings, and echoes back her gentle tone;
Were I, too, near her, never should be heard
A songster's note more pleasant than my own;
Sweeter than sweetest nightingale I'd sing;
For thee, my lady fair,
This yoke of love I bear,
Deign tho to comfort me, and ease my sorrowing.

The illustration above from the manuscript shows the poet sitting on a couch composing a song to his "Lady", who appears to him in a dream. She is carrying the symbolic white dog of fidelity. At the top of the painting appear, in the usual manner, the poet's coat of arms and knightly headdress.

her wolfran von Eschilbach

Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170 to 1220)

Is the greatest poet in the Middle Ages. Like so many of the poets of that time, we know little about him. He evidently was a member of the lower nobility, and may have been a younger son. He came from the little Bavarian town of Eschenbach, from which his name comes. In spite of his boast that he could neither read nor write he had a very good knowledge of Latin, French and German writings, available at that time. He boasts also of his prowess as a knight and was extremely proud of his ability as a fighter. His most important work was "Parzival". His poetry was natural, original, but introspective which sometimes made it obscure. He had imagination and a good sense of humour, which was sometimes sardonic. He may have been a vassal in the service of Graf von Wertheim in his early life but later spent much of his best years at the court of Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia. Here he met and influenced the younger poet Walter von der Vogelweide. In his later life he was given a house and some land, and died in his birthplace Eschenbach, where he was buried in the churchyard of Our Lady at Eschenbach.

Only eight of his minnesongs are extant and many of these are tagelieds or morning songs.

Would I the lofty spirit melt
  Of that proud dame who dwells so high,
Kind heaven must aid me, or unfelt
  By her will be its agony.
Joy in my soul no place can find;
  As well might I a suitor be
To thunderbolts, as hope her mind
  Will turn in softer mood to me.

The illustration opposite from the manuscript shows Wolfram von Eschenbach dressed in full knightly armour, with his page beside him holding his horse. (This, I am sure is the way that he saw himself) He is holding his shield in one hand and his banner in the other.

her walther vō der vogelweide .

Walter von der Vogelweide (1190 - 1240)

His name "Vogelweide" means of the "birdmeadow". He was a South German for he spoke and wrote the Bavarian dialect. He was evidently of a noble family for he used the term "Herr". He was very poor and soon found his way to the court of Duke Leopold V in Vienna. Here he met and became a pupil of Reinmar von Hagenau (der Alt). About 1198 he lost the favor of his leige lord and began twelve years of wandering from court to court as a "fahrender Sanger". During his wanderings he spent some time at the court of the Landgraf of Thuringia, where he met Wolfram von Eschenbach, supposedly at the legendary Wartburg music contest. He became an adherent of the Hohenstaufen King Frederich II and was given a small holding in Wurtzberg for his services. Here he was buried in the cloisters of the New Cathedral in Wurtzburg.

He is known as the greatest lyric poet of the Middle Ages. His early poetry was mainly minneleider, but in his later life much of his verse was political, patriotic and religious. About 200 of his verses exist.

Here is a song of his longing for a home of his own:

Fain (could it be) would I a home obtain,
And warm me by a hearth-side of my own.
Then, then, I'd sing about the sweet bird's strain,
And field and flowers, as I have whilom done;
And paint in song the lily and the rose
That dwell upon her cheek who smiles on me.
But lone I stray - no home its comfort shows;
Ah, luckless man! Still doom'd a guest to be!

One of his political poems to Leopold VII; with an ironic twist at the end:

Worthy art thou, returning home, the bell
For thee should ring, and crowds come gathering round
To gaze, how as a gladdening miracle
Thou com'st, of sin or shame all blameless found.
Man's praise and woman's love shall thus abound;
And this thy glorious welcome shall dispel
The slanderous words which some have breathed around,
That honour bad thee still at distance dwell.

In the painting in the Manuscript Walter is shown sitting on a small green knoll in a thoughtful attitude, composing a verse, for the symbolic scroll is shown in his hand. His sword lies unbuckled from his waist beside him. His coat of arms and headdress are above him. The symbol of his armour is the singing bird, also on his headdress.

MEISTER JOHANS HADLOUB

Johannes Hadloub (about 1250 to 1310)

He was a native of Zürich and a friend of Rüdiger Manesse. The term "Meister" was always used when speaking of him for he was highly regarded in his time as the last of the true line of minnesingers. Although now his work is considered artificial and more imitative than sincere, his work was much superior to the later meistersingers who followed him.

Far as I journey from my lady fair,
I have a messenger who quickly goes
Morning and noon, and at the evening's close,
Where'ere she wanders he pursues her there.
A restless, faithful, secret messenger
Well may he be, who, from my heart of hearts,
Charg'd with love's deepest secrets, thus depart
And wings his way to her!
'Tis every thought I form that doth pursue
Thee, lady fair!
Ah! would that there
My wearied self had leave to follow too!

In the painting from the manuscript above, the poet is shown in the upper half being made much of by a group of ladies. In the bottom picture he is handing "his lady" a note or a poem when she is entering the church. She is carrying the symbolic small white dog. His coat of arms are above his head in the lower half of the picture.

MEISTER HEINRICH VROUWENLOP

Heinrich von Meissen (Frauenlaub) (Died about 1318)

He is known as the last of the minnesingers or the first of the meistersingers, because he represents the latter more than the former. He was probably a burgher of Mainz. He wandered from court to court and finally settled in Mainz and set up a music school there. Much of his verse is still extant; it is now found to be extremely artificial and conventional. He was greatly lamented on his death by the women of the town who bore his body to the Cathedral of Mainz where he was buried.

One of his songs is entitled "Honor Women".

O women pure, all worlds in thee preserving
For God and for His Mother divine,
My song proclaims, from thee unswerving,
Of highest souls art thou the shrine:
No master can exhaust thy lofty praises.

He received fame in his day only because the more important of the minnesingers were dead. In the illustration Frauenlaub is shown conducting an orchestra.

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The Grösse Heidelberger Manessiche Lieder-Mandschrift will be on display in the Main Rotunda of the Cameron Library until the end of March. After that time anyone wishing to consult it may do so in the Rare Book Room.

Dorothy I. Hamilton,
Rare Books and Archives Department.